

Tale Feathers

Oct 2003

Volume 70

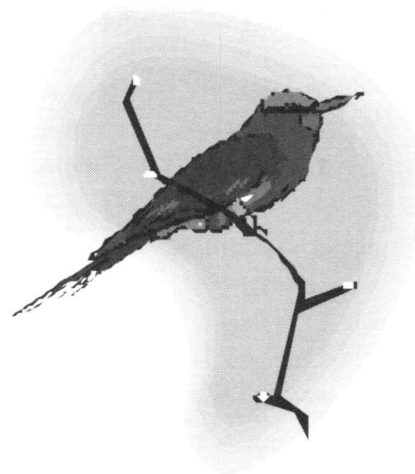
Number 8

Birds and Burning: Good Prescription or Bad

Mark your calendar for Tuesday, October 21, 2003 at 7:30 p.m. at the Powder Valley Nature Center.

Professor John Blake, University of Missouri-St. Louis, will discuss the results of a six year survey at Cuivre River State Park to assess the effects of prescribed burns on resident and migrant bird species and the plant community. This important work has potential impact throughout Missouri and the Midwest where prescribed burning has become a popular tool in the attempts to restore native prairie, glade, and savannah habitat lost through human disruption of the pre-settlement ecosystems.

Professor Blake has been conducting research into various aspects of avian biology for nearly twenty years. He has been with the University of Missouri since 1990 and has focused his research, in part, on the distribution and abundance patterns of birds and the influence of habitat structure and alteration, including forest fragmentation, on bird populations.



Open to all-members or not. Refreshments will be available. From the intersection of Interstates 44 & 270, take Watson Rd. to Geyer Rd. Turn north on Geyer for 200 yds. to Cragwold Rd. Go west on Cragwold for 1 mi. to nature center entrance on right. Follow drive to parking lot. Enter building through left entrance. Questions, call Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.

Inside

President's Report

Trinidad and Tobago Birding

Conservation Report

Backyard Birding

Birding Trips

Bat Class

St. Louis Audubon Society

New Members

Nan Boileau
Michael Brady
Blaine Clark
Maryanne Clark
Mary A. Dust
Martha Ferguson
Joan Kellar
Toby McCammon
Scott Remes
Mary A. Shaw
Miss D.E. Weyrauch
Stephen Wren
David W. DeSutter
W. M. Lovely

Transfers

Richard Donohue
Sue Eigel
Mrs. J. Poor

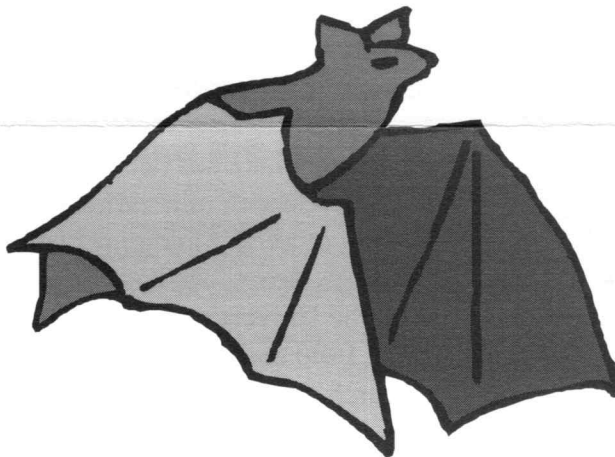
Why don't birds fall off their perches when they sleep?

Birds don't have to work at not falling off their perches. Tendons on the bottom of their feet, called flexor tendons, respond to pressure from a branch or other perch by causing the toes to wrap around the perch automatically. Humans would have to expend energy to hold on, but birds would have to exert effort to unclench. It's the relaxed position, as can be plainly seen in dead birds, which have their toes clenched up.

President's Report

Bill Salsgiver

And so it begins again - the school year, that is. Life still revolves around the school year at our house. Our two sons left for college a few weeks ago, so it is eerily quiet at the old homestead again. St. Louis Audubon's activities coincide with the school year as well. Our Education Committee is geared up for their presentations to classrooms and the Field Trip Committee is finding the fall migrants as they pass through the area. At the southern point of its annual excursion, the Lily Belle stopped by under the Arch a few weeks ago for a visit. It was great to see a few SLAS folks there to greet the Lily Belle and her crew. We sang Happy Birthday to the 79 years young Captain Ike Hastings. And we were sure glad to see Dan McGuinness up and around after a bad boat accident that he had earlier in the summer during a river clean up. Audubon Missouri is working to find a way to have a presence on the Mississippi River in the St. Louis area, be that the Lily Belle or another boat. It is exciting to ponder. We wish them well and look forward to ways that we can work together. I'll close for now, and hope to see many of you at one of our events during the coming months.



Bat Class at the Green Center

Dale Ponce, St. Louis Audubon Society member, offers an interesting class "Building a Bat Box" on Saturday, October 25, 1-3pm. Visit a newly installed bat box at the Green Center's restored wetland in the heart of University City. Learn how to attract bats to your own yard. Blueprints and materials list will be provided.

For more info on this class and many other autumn seasonal classes and activities at the Green Center, please contact their staff by phone at **314-725-8314** or by email at **class-es@thegreencenter.org**. A complete class schedule and a printer friendly registration form is available at **www.thegreencenter.org**.

Birding Trips

Oct 5, Sunday - WGNSS walk led by Mike Thelen. Location and time to be announced so see the WGNSS website for details.

Oct 11, Saturday - SLAS trip to Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge and Riverlands. This will be an all day trip so those who want to go that long should bring lunch and water. Meet at 8:00 AM across the road from the Brussels Ferry in Grafton, Illinois. We will start at the Gilbert Lake portion of the refuge. Paul Bauer and John Solodar will be our leaders.

Oct 18, Saturday - SLAS trip to Clarence Cannon NWR starting at 8:00 AM with Jim Malone and Torrey Berger leading. This has always been one of our more pleasant and relaxed birding trips. The weather should be ideal and the birds plentiful. From Clarence Cannon we will also look into B.K. Leach Conservation area, Prairie Slough so bring a lunch and water if you want to go all day with us.

Oct 19, Sunday - WGNSS trip to Horseshoe Lake led by Frank Holmes at 8:00 AM. This trip is scheduled to start at the pavilion at the end of the causeway, but may start near the park entrance if the causeway is closed because of duck season.

Oct 25, Saturday - SLAS trip to Little Creve Coeur Lake and Creve Coeur Lake. Migrating waterfowl should be starting to come in good numbers and we might see migrating soras, rails and sparrows as well. Join Mike Grant and Jim Malone for an 8:00 AM start. This trip will be combined with the St. Louis County Parks Department Bird-N-Learn series, but note that the fee charged by County Parks is only required of those who sign up through County Parks. Show up as part of the SLAS group and pay no fee.

Nov 2, Sunday - A WGNSS trip led by Mike Thelen is on the schedule at a location and time to be announced. Check the WGNSS website for details.

Nov 8, Saturday - SLAS trip to Horseshoe Lake starts at 8:00 AM to look for gulls, ducks and sparrows and whatever else may be migrating through late in the season. This trip will be led by Paul Bauer and Torrey Berger.

Nov 16, Sunday - Kent Lannert will lead a WGNSS trip at Horseshoe Lake starting at 8:00 AM.

Nov 22, Saturday - SLAS trip to Busch Conservation Area and Weldon Springs starting at 8:00 AM. Lots of winter birds should be here by now and we may see Harris' Sparrow, both nuthatches and other interesting land birds. The lakes should offer a variety of gulls and ducks. This trip will be led by Mike Thelen and Mike Grant.

How to get there

Horseshoe Lake - Take I-70 east across the Poplar Street Bridge. Exit at Hwy 111 (exit 6) and turn left. Go about 2 miles to the State Park entrance (on the left). Meet at 1st parking lot on the right.

Busch Conservation Area - Take U.S.40/I-64 west into St. Charles County. Take Hwy 94 south from U.S 40 about 1 mile to Hwy D. Turn right and go about 1.5 miles to the entrance on the right. Turn left at the "T" to Hampton Lake and meet in the parking lot.

Creve Coeur Lake/Little Creve Coeur Lake complex. From the western leg of I-270 go west on Olive for 2.0 miles. Turn right on Creve Coeur Mill Road and travel about 1.5 miles to the green roofed building on the right, adjacent to Mallard Lake.

Two Rivers NWR - Follow the directions to Riverlands, but go over the Clark Bridge into Alton IL. Go left on Route 143 at the end of the bridge and left again at the intersection with Route 100. Follow Route 100 upriver through Grafton. Meet in the parking lot across from the Brussels Ferry.

Clarence Cannon NWR - Take Missouri Hwy 79 north from I-70 to Annada. Turn right on the south side of Annada and follow signs to the headquarters. The trip takes about 65-70 minutes from the intersection of I-170 and I-70 near the airport.

Backyard Birding--The Beginning

Mitch Leachman

The trees stood out the most. Large and mature--overhanging the drives and parking areas--shading the buildings and lawns. With the trees came the sights and sounds of an urban outdoors. Squirrels chasing each other around the trunks. Cicadas and mantis humming their tunes from the shrubs and trees. And the chirps, whistles and songs of birds hidden in the dense crowns of oaks and maples and elms. I was searching for a residence for me and my companion, a part-Calico named Cheyenne, and with both of us loving to spend hours nature watching, the complex was ideal.

Upon arrival, Cheyenne was first to take notice of the many sparrows, starlings, cardinals, and blue jays perching on the weathered-gray and mildew-green, wood slat fence that encloses the patio area. About half of the plot is open ground, and I was already making mental plans for future plantings. However, an article I had just finished on backyard bird gardening fueled a desire to immediately make my new rented landscape more bird-friendly.

A birdbath seemed ideal--it would be a place to cool and clean themselves as well as quench their thirst. For although we rarely see a bird drink and their bodies conserve water much better than ours, water is perhaps even more essential to them than for us. Also, in spite of recent wet weather, we were entering the peak of summer, and water sources were certain to be in short supply. Of course, enhancing our nature viewing pleasure would be a nice added benefit.

I wanted the birdbath to be not only functional, but simple, portable, and economical. For about \$25, I purchased a wrought iron plant stand and a clay saucer. The plant stand stood about two feet tall and was made of a black iron tripod with a welded hoop above that normally held the potted plant. Instead, on top of the hoop rested a fourteen inch, shallow clay saucer filled with water. Crude, to be sure, but a respite for birds need not be elaborate to be useful.

After our first full hot and dry week, I was

frustrated in not seeing a single bird even visit the bath, let alone drink or bathe. What did I overlook in the establishment of this hoped-for bird haven? Is the pool of water too small or too shallow? Is the stand too low to the ground? Is the water too warm from the full heat of the all-day sun? Is it simply unnoticed with the bare ground around it not enough to attract attention? I can only guess at the possible answers.

In the meantime, it appears the "bird"bath has found other takers. Through our birdwatching, Cheyenne and I had observed hornets occasionally buzz the backyard, tap the glass doors, and wander the fencetop. Today, I saw perhaps a dozen hornets, one or two at a time, land on the edge of the saucer, then dip down toward the water. While they were out of sight, small, rapid ripples would course across the water as the hornet, I assume, took a drink. Afterward, they would often rest on the saucer's edge and clean their wings before again taking flight.

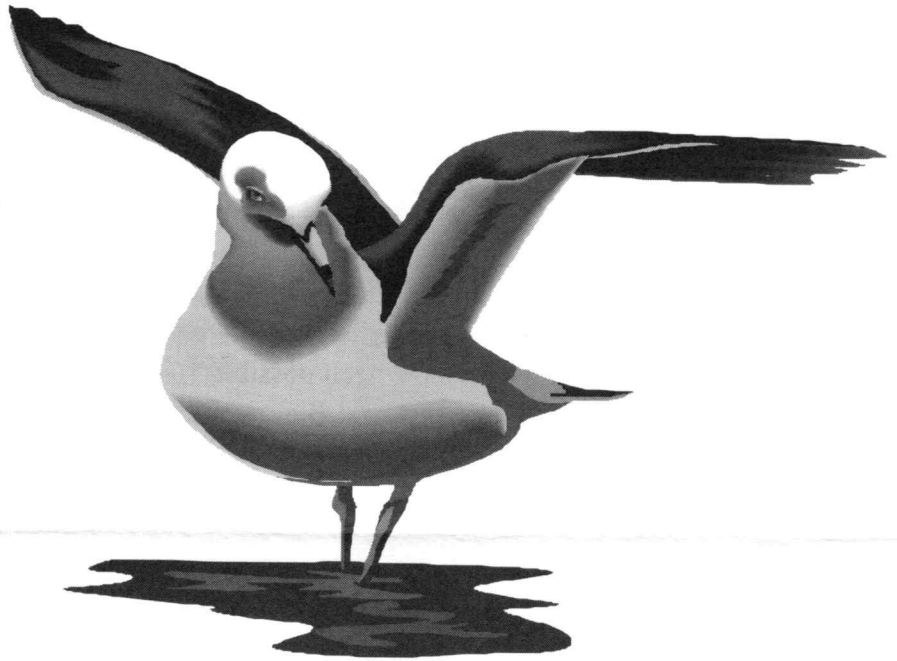
I confess my first feelings on hornets in my backyard was hardly of reverence, but of fear and the desire to destroy. However, I refrained from quick reactions, patiently observed them and considered their existence. Not only do I now see them as interesting and beautiful in their own way, but they are also contributing members of my local, urban natural community. Just as if myself, my family or my neighborhood were to suddenly disappear, it would effect people and places I could not begin to predict. Similarly, I cannot presume to know the ripple effects of removing members of a natural, interconnected community--no matter how fearsome or seemingly insignificant they appear to be. So although my bird-bath is apparently lacking something for my local feathered friends, I am perfectly content watching some of my other new neighbors visit their "hornet"bath.



Conservation Report

Sue Gustafson, Vice President Conservation

Several years ago, the U.S Army Corps of Engineers restarted the **Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study** in order to assess efficiencies of the locks and dams system while minimizing significant environmental, cultural, and social impacts over the next 50 years. The Corps is now holding a series of public meetings to review the preliminary findings and to present the alternatives for navigation efficiency and ecosystem restoration. This is the public's opportunity to let the Corps know how we want the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers managed. A draft recommended plan will be developed based on input and comments received. The meeting in St. Louis will be held **Monday, October 20** at Spazio Westport, 12031 Lackland Road in Maryland Heights. The agenda includes an Open House from 3-5 p.m., Opening Presentation 6:30-7:15 p.m., Presentation-related questions and answers 7:15-8:00 p.m., Group Completion of Comment Sheets 8:00-8:30 p.m., followed by general questions and answers and statements. Audubon has a special focus on Mississippi River ecosystem restoration, and Audubon's Upper Mississippi River Program and chapters located along the river will be providing input at this and six other public meetings held throughout October in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.



Help assist in urban bird habitat restoration by volunteering at the fifth annual

"Free the Kennedy Woods" Honeysuckle Cut in Forest Park on Sunday, November 9 (rain date November 16). Kennedy Woods has historically been one of the finest urban stopover sites for migratory birds during spring and fall migration, but there is a large problem with invasive honeysuckle crowding out the native forest understory. The last four years we've been highly successful at ridding certain areas of the woods of invasive honeysuckle by getting a turnout of over 90 people to cut and paint the stumps of the honeysuckle bushes, but our job isn't over yet! We need volunteers to work in 2-and 3-person teams to cut and paint the stumps with Roundup. We'll supply the Roundup, and volunteers are urged to bring their own gloves and saws, loppers, or pruning shears. It's hard work, but satisfying. Work at either of two shifts: 10:00 a.m. to noon or noon to 2:00 p.m. Meet at the shelter near the Kennedy Forest trailhead off of Wells Drive (west of the south zoo entrance). To sign up or get up-to-date information, go to <http://treeswallow.com/honeysuckle>, or phone Jerry Farm at 314-644-4302 or email honeysuckle@treeswallow.com.

Mark your calendars for the annual **University of Mo-St. Louis Conservation Forum on Wednesday, November 5** at The Living World Building, St. Louis Zoo 5:30 -10:00 p.m. St. Louis Audubon will join other area conservation organizations in the central display area, and concurrent sessions on conservation topics will begin at 5:30 p.m. The keynote speaker at 7:30 p.m. will be Dr. Frank Joyce, Director of the Tropical Biology Education Abroad Program at the University of California who is based in Monteverde, Costa Rica. Admission is free.

Biologist's Artwork Helps Raise Money for Scholarships

Tom Hockett

The past few months have afforded Godfrey Bourne an uncommon opportunity to raise money for a group of people he cares for a great deal: his students.

Since December, the part-time artist and full time biologist at the University of Missouri-St. Louis has sold display quality prints of his original paintings and sketches of birds. Proceeds benefit the Biology Graduate Student Association at the university.

The group is setting aside money to fund a new program that will enable graduate students to mentor undergraduate students while doing field research, such as gathering and identifying plant samples, researching changes to the environment and studying habitats of wild animals.

Bourne, of Bellerive, MO, says undergraduate biology students at the university have limited exposure to fieldwork and he wants that to change.

"Our undergraduate students are missing out by not having enough research experience," he said. "This mentoring program may give them some time during the summer to work with graduate students, and they will see how rich the field of biology is."

Patricia Parker, chair of the Department of Biology at UMSL, couldn't agree more. She says the research will be of equal benefit to graduates and undergraduates.

"This program is excellent for both parties, as the funding can projects possible that might not have happened otherwise," she said. "The undergraduate gets hands-on research experience, and the graduates gets more done than would otherwise have been possible."

It was Parker who first approached Bourne about dressing up the department's conference room with some of his work. Bourne liked the idea and had a handful of prints made for the room.

That led to a discussion about a fund-raiser, and before long, 18 prints were available for purchase online. Prices range from \$15 to \$30. The images capture some of Bourne's favorite species of birds. He uses a variety of mediums, including watercolor, pencil and gouache.

Bourne, who is nearly 60, has been observing, drawing and painting scenes from nature since he was 8 years old and living in his home country of Guyana in South America. His more than decades of experience as an artist and biologist is evident in his work, which is amazingly lifelike and detailed.

To date, the student association has raised \$300 through the sale of Bourne's art, according to Emilie Bess, a graduate student and BGSA president.

"We really appreciate Dr. Bourne's generosity," she said. "It's great. It's unique that a faculty member would be invested in his students enough to donate his work on our behalf."

To view print samples, visit <http://www.ums.edu/%7Ebiology/paintsale.html>. To order a print, e-mail Bess at ecbyqf@student.mail.ums.edu.

This article was reprinted from UMSL Magazine.

When birds fly in the rain, why doesn't it hurt their eyes?

Birds have a sort of thin extra eyelid called a nictitating membrane that protects their eyes and may do so in the rain. The membrane is not entirely transparent, so the birds may not see clearly, but they can probably see light and dark. As in cats, dogs and other animals, this membrane can flick over the eye very quickly to protect it. It guards against collisions when birds are crashing through brush, and in birds of prey like the peregrine falcon, it closes immediately before impact with victims, covering the eyes as the bird seizes its prey.

Trinidad & Tobago Birding

John Solodar

There has been some discussion recently about St. Louis Audubon Society sponsoring a birding trip to the two island Caribbean nation of Trinidad & Tobago. This country lies just off the northern coast of Venezuela. Those of us who have been there can attest to the fantastic tropical birding available. The Asa Wright Lodge on Trinidad is world famous and features good food, amiable hosts, excellent birding guides and a number of good trails on site. The country is politically stable and English is the spoken language. I suggest that you read Jean Graebner's article in the Sept 2003 Bluebird for a discussion of a recent trip there.

Currently I am trying to gauge the local interest in organizing a trip to T&T. I would do the organizing through Caligo Ventures, the company that handles North American trips to Asa Wright Lodge. The time frame would be sometime between June 2004 and March 2005. Costs vary seasonally, but per person charges based on double occupancy run from \$1,595 - \$1,950 for a seven day birding trip to both islands, \$1,695 - \$2,395 for an eleven day trip to both islands and \$1,295 - \$1,795 for an eight day trip to Trinidad only. Prices are from New York or Miami on BWIA and seem to include everything except gratuities.

If you are interested in this proposed trip please contact John Solodar at solodar1@mindspring.com or 314-862-5294. Let me know which month would be best for you and any other constraints you might have. Paul Bauer has a slide presentation on the birds of T & T that he is willing to share if there is sufficient interest.

No Fall Picnic

Please note: the Fall Picnic originally scheduled for Oct 5, 2003 has been cancelled. Please join us for our general membership meeting on Oct 21 and our upcoming Holiday Open House (held jointly with WGNSS) on Dec. 7, 2003. Thank you.

Tale Feathers

Tale Feathers is published monthly by the St. Louis Audubon Society. Messenger Printing prints 2,500 copies of each newsletter on recycled paper using soy ink. Anne Bolte edits the newsletter.

St. Louis Audubon Society 2003 - 2004

St. Louis Audubon Society
P.O. Box 220227
Kirkwood, MO 63122
Phone: 314-822-6595

Officers

President - Bill Salsgiver	636-225-1490
VP Education - Dale Ponce	636-394-6011
VP Conservation - Sue Gustafson	314-968-8128
VP Finance - Torrey Berger	314-579-9227
Treasurer - David Rabenau	314-968-8128
Secretary - Mary Smidt	636-227-6127

Board members

Anne Bolte	314-832-0938
Cathy Devine	314-962-3460
Joe Eades	314-966-3171
Mike Grant	636-519-0208
Anne Rankin Horton	636-256-3402
Dency Kahn	dkahn@stlcc.edu
Mitch Leachman	314-739-5112
Pat Lueders	314-961-6614
Jerry Miller	314-389-3969
Arthur Montgomery	314-822-1215
Sharon Nickl	636-391-8751
Dave Pierce	314-434-1651
John Solodar	314-862-5294
Mike Thelen	314-862-6642
Linda Tossing	314-849-4260
Dave Tylka	636-942-3142

Attention!

The deadline for the Nov. issue is
October 10. Send inquiries to Anne by
E-mail ambolte@swbell.net
phone 314.832.0938
post 6939 Sharp
St. Louis, MO 63116

St. Louis Audubon Society

P.O. Box 220227

St. Louis, Mo. 63122

Ph: 314.822.6595

www.stlouisaudubon.org



a member of Earth Share
of Missouri

NON-PROFIT
ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ST. LOUIS, MO.
PERMIT NO. 5128

Join the St. Louis Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society

As a joint member with National Audubon, you will receive National Audubon's quarterly magazine (Audubon) as well as St. Louis Audubon Society's Newsletter (Tale Feathers). Now you also have the opportunity to join only the St. Louis Audubon Society, receive Tale Feathers, and participate in the educational and conservation activities of St. Louis Audubon. There is no distinction between individual and family membership. Dues cover all members at the same address. For information, call (314) 822-6595.

St. Louis Audubon Society / National Audubon Society -- Membership Application

All applicants please check: ☐ New, or ☐ Renewal Use this form to join St. Louis Audubon / National Audubon

For joint membership in St. Louis Audubon Society and National Audubon Society, Make checks payable to **National Audubon Society** and mail to St. Louis Audubon Society, P. O. Box 220227, Kirkwood, MO 63122.

☐ Introductory Membership / \$20 ☐ Special Two-Year Introductory Membership / \$30

☐ Senior Citizen / \$15 (New and renewal) ☐ Student / \$15 (New and renewal)

☐ Renewal / \$35 (We recommend that you use the forms supplied by National Audubon)

Membership in only the St. Louis Audubon Society. Write checks payable to **SLAS**. Mail to St. Louis Audubon Society, P. O. Box 220227, Kirkwood, MO 63122.

☐ Local Chapter Membership only (St. Louis Audubon Society), Introductory and renewal. / \$15

Name

Address

City State Zip Code NO1 7XCH